

Key Definitions

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We have gathered definitions from a variety of sources that clarify the role of public health and the disciplines of health promotion and health education. We hope you will find them helpful for such things as planning documents, program and job descriptions, grants and presentations.

Essential Public Health Services

Public Health:

- Prevents epidemics and the spread of disease
- Protects against environmental hazards
- Prevents injuries
- Promotes and encourages healthy behaviors
- Responds to disasters and assists communities in recovery
- Assures the quality and accessibility of health services

Essential Public Health Services:

- **Monitor** health status to identify community problems
- **Diagnose** and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community
- **Inform, educate and empower** people about health issues
- **Mobilize** community partnerships and actions to identify and solve health problems
- **Develop** policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts
- **Enforce** laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety
- **Link** people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable
- **Assure** a competent public health and personal health care workforce
- **Evaluate** effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services
- **Research** for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

*American Public Health Association,
Public Health Functions Steering Committee*

*We don't
always do the
best job of
communicating
what we do to
policy makers
or the public.
It helps if we
can share
some common
definitions
that speak
plainly about
the role of
public health
and the
disciplines
of health
education
and health
promotion.*

Health Promotion

● Health promotion is a planned combination of health education, preventive measures and policy changes aimed at improving health status and creating healthy environments and behaviors. Health promotion provides knowledge, skills and capacity to assist individuals, groups and communities in identifying health needs, obtaining information and resources, and mobilizing to achieve change.

Office of Health Promotion, Washington State Department of Health

● Health promotion is the art and science of helping people change their lifestyles to move toward a state of optimal health.

American Journal of Health Promotion

● Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capabilities. Therefore, health promotion is not just the responsibility of the health sector, but goes beyond healthy life-styles to well-being.

Ottawa Charter, 1st International Conference on Health Promotion

● Health promotion is a process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health . . . a mediating strategy between people and their environment, synthesizing personal choice and social responsibility in health.

World Health Organization

● Health Promotion is the combination of educational and environmental supports for actions and conditions of living conducive to health.

Joint Committee on Health Education Technology: Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education, Association of State and Territorial Health Officers

● Increasingly, health promotion is being recognized as an essential element of health development. It is a process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. Health promotion, through investments and actions, acts on the determinants of health to create the greatest health gain for people, to contribute significantly to the reduction of inequities in health, to ensure human rights, and to build social capital. The ultimate goal is to increase health expectancy, and to narrow the gap in health expectancy between countries and groups.

Jakarta Declaration, 4th International Conference on Health Promotion

Health Education

● Public health education is a process that assists individuals, small groups and larger populations to identify health needs and priorities, obtain information and resources needed to meet those needs, and mobilize action aimed at achieving desired change. It focuses on creating an environment in which there are strong individual and structural supports for informed and voluntary decision-making about personal health and community well-being.

University of California at Berkeley School of Public Health

● Health education is the combination of planned social actions and learning experiences designed to enable people to gain control over the determinants of health and health behaviors, and the conditions that affect their health status and the health status of others.

Meeting Global Health Challenges, XIV World Health Conference on Health Education, World Health Organization, International Union for Health Education

● Health education [is] any designed combination of methods to facilitate voluntary adaptations of behavior conducive to health.

Lawrence Green, Marshall Kreuter, Sigrid Deeds and Kay Partridge, Health Education Planning—A Diagnostic Approach

● Health education is the process of assisting individuals, acting separately and collectively, to make informed decisions on matters affecting individual, family, and community health. Based on scientific foundations, health education is a field of interest, a discipline, a profession.

The Role Delineation Process, quoted in the CHES Study Guide

● Health education is any combination of learning experiences designed to facilitate voluntary actions conducive to health.

Joint Committee on Health Education Technology: Association of State and Territorial Directors of Health Promotion and Public Health Education, Association of State and Territorial Health Officers

Health Educators

- A health educator designs, organizes, implements, communicates, provides advice on and evaluates the effect of educational programs and strategies designed to support and modify health-related behaviors of individuals, families, organizations and communities.

Revision of the Federal Standard Occupational Classification System

- A patient educator, public health educator, community health educator, health education specialist, health promotion director, wellness manager:

Applies theory and principles of behavioral and social sciences to design, organize, implement, communicate, and evaluate the effect of educational programs and strategies related to health behaviors of individuals, families, organizations, and communities. Activities may include individual counseling and referrals as well as community needs assessment, community organization, social marketing, and policy and media advocacy.

SOPHE recommendations to Federal Standard Occupational Classification System

- Health educators bring unique expertise in program planning and evaluation as well as behavior change theories, coalition building, community empowerment, media advocacy, policy formation, epidemiology, health planning, biostatistics and other core public health content areas.

Elaine Auld, SOPHE Executive Director

- What health educators do:

- Small and large group facilitation

- Community mobilization

- Communications planning

- Develop and evaluate educational materials and training

- Create educational interventions

Joanne Bonnar-Prado, Washington State Department of Health



Washington State Department of

Office of Health Promotion
P.O. Box 47833
Olympia, WA 98504-7833
360-236-3736